
A
TREATISE
ON
LEVELLING PRINCIPLES.

THE ARTIST
ON
LEVELLING PRINCIPLES.

A
SHORT
TREATISE
ON THE
DREADFUL TENDENCY
OF
Lebelling Principles.

BY THE HON. JOHN SOMERS COCKS, M.P.

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P R E F A C E.

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THE Author of the following short Treatise on the dreadful tendency of Levelling Principles, does not imagine, that any Observations will be found therein, which have not already suggested themselves to most persons, who have impartially considered the subject.

Some men, however, there are, so immersed in business, as to have little or no
 time

time for refuting plausible insinuations :—

Others are hurried away by the mere found of words, without reflecting at all on the possibility or nature of things. And not a few justly detesting Despotism suffer themselves to be drawn into the vortex of the contrary extreme, out of which it is difficult to escape, with either body or mind in health. To some or other of these, possibly the following Observations may be of use : At any rate, the Author by publishing them, will have the satisfaction of declaring his own unshaken loyalty to his King, and his inviolable attachment to the established Constitution of his Country,

Country, which it is defirable every good Subject should do at this crisis, in a manner the most unequivocal and decided.

LEVELLING PRINCIPLES.

A SHORT

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good Subject should do at this crisis, in a
manner the most unequivocal and de-
cided.
The Author has endeavoured to present
a sketch of the various circumstances
to which the people are exposed, and
which require the attention of the
Legislature.
The Author has also endeavoured to
show the necessity of a more
vigilant and active Government, and
the importance of a more
uniform and consistent
policy.

A SHORT

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TREATISE
ON THE
DREADFUL TENDENCY
OF
LEVELLING PRINCIPLES.

AFTER affording all the consideration in my power to the novel and alarming notions at this time prevalent amongst the people of France, the equality which is pretended to be set up amongst them, appears to me, wholly incompatible with the existence of society. So far, as their ambitious or infatuated leaders extend its pernicious influence, I am convinced, they will further contribute to the degradation of their species, and the introduction of the most shocking

crimes into the world. They talk much of natural rights. What those of mankind may be, is a question perhaps, as little understood, as it has been much agitated by Philosophers. But what a savage state of man actually is, has been authenticated to us on the evidence of well attested accounts, free from fable and conjecture. Now, all levelling notions necessarily tend as to their ultimate point of perfection towards this state, in which there can exist no right of property ; no human laws or tribunals ; no criterion of right or wrong ; no inducement to prefer right to wrong ; no social tie or connection whatever : for these ideas result from reason, the use of which a man forgoes, in as much as he is savage. It must be acknowledged, however, by persons of all political persuasions, that in a savage state, as high a degree of freedom, equality, and independence, as is natural to man, will prevail. If, therefore, the highest possible degree of freedom, equality, and independence, attainable by man is the most desirable of all things, it would seem as if this hitherto reprobated state should be so. Yet is it not of the very essence of a creature to experience superiority over him ? and if so, must it not be the duty of a rational creature to bear it where it

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is reasonable without repining? Scarcely can we hope that profelytes should be made of those, if such there are, whose darkened minds are attached to a savage state *on principle*. Let us only request that men will not suffer themselves to be imposed on by mere words, however well sounding; not even those of liberty and equality, nor act with violence in any cause without first making themselves thoroughly acquainted with the real tendency of the objects, which it holds forth to them as worthy of admiration and pursuit.

With regard to liberty, every man of true spirit ought to be willing to lay down his life in order to defend or obtain it; but for equality, it is altogether visionary. In order to demonstrate the non-existence of any right of man to it by nature, it is sufficient to shew that inequality prevails amongst men in all those points which depend exclusively on nature, such as health, strength, but above all, mental ability. If it is unnatural that one human creature should in any respect be superior to another, how happens it that one should have greater bodily strength, or more comprehensive mental faculties than another. Such a difference is evidently a natural superiority on

the one side, and constitutes an undeniable inequality between men, no two individuals having precisely the same degree of understanding or strength. Hence the very reverse of the so much contended for proposition, that men are born equal, unquestionably appears to be true, namely, that men are born unequal; which being so as must be allowed by every person who thinks rationally, and speaks truly on the subject, all right to equality by nature falls at once to the ground. On such a sandy foundation is reared the levelling system, which bids defiance to all laws, religion and government, and aims at the demolition of all establishments. If indeed, a large number of persons could live together so virtuously, as to require no force to oblige them to act justly towards each other, I admit that government would, in such a case, be superfluous without having recourse to the false position, that men are born equal. But surely the thing is impossible, all history contradicts so wild an expectation, and our daily intercourse with our fellow-creatures proves beyond a doubt the absurdity of it.

Having now concisely shewn that natural equality does not exist between man and man,
thereby-

thereby taking away all claim to equality upon the principle of natural rights; let us next proceed to make it as evidently appear that political or civil equality is also a child of the imagination, without any pretence to reality. A state of society is founded on reason, and is precisely the reverse of a savage state, which can admit of no other basis than that of mere animal instinct. The consideration of mutual wants, and the means of removing them, of reciprocal charity, and the methods of most efficaciously assisting one another; a desire suggested and encouraged by the rational mind, in the place of natural infirmity to substitute artificial strength, and by all these various channels to pour in alleviating comforts on the otherwise helpless state of humanity; these results of reason induce man to wish for society, to attempt its establishment, and to effect it. It is undoubtedly his duty and his interest afterwards to improve it as much as possible; but if it was right or prudent originally to enter into it, it never can be wise or justifiable to dissolve it, which those who pretend to aim at equality are really endeavouring to do: for the essence of society is, that all in their different and respective occupations should labour or act for the good of all. Now
 who

who will toil further than is necessary, to satisfy the wants of the present moment, unless he expects to enjoy the fruits of his labour: and if men have no other objects in view, than the satisfying of such wants, wherein lies the difference between their situation and a savage state. Is not security of property therefore essential to society? If it be, let us then consider, whether the inequality of it be not a necessary consequence of its security? Various in all respects are the qualifications of mind and body which fall to the lot of different human creatures. The prudent and industrious increase, the slothfull and inconsiderate diminish, whatever fund they may be originally possessed of; and supposing two men to die equally rich, he that has twelve children, cannot leave such an original fund to every one of them, as he that has one, can to that only child. Some then must be poorer than others; that is, inequality of property must subsist in society, from whence immediately arises inequality of station. Under this beneficial order of things the rich furnish the means of industrious livelihood to the poor, by various employments, all advantageous to the public, and the individuals concerned; the poor, in their turn, by their labour, are the instruments that
 increase

increase the opulence of the rich, which necessarily flows back upon them, by furnishing again the means of honest and advantageous employment to a greater number of poor than before.

How far it is desirable that riches and poverty should form the only civil distinction between man and man, may be a matter of opinion. I have no scruple to avow my own sentiments on the subject; that it is better to check the pride of wealth, by rendering nobility, in some degree, necessary to great power and consequence in a citizen. A country governed by rich merchants becomes sordid; a nation ruled by poor nobles ferocious; but a state which tempers the one necessary inequality with the useful variety of the other, is, for the most part, great and flourishing. It is doubtless inconsistent with the spirit of a free-born man to be excluded by the laws of his country from admission into the order of her nobility. Such partial institutions cannot be intended for the good of the whole community, and therefore are despotic and unjust, and in point of policy calculated to render the nobility odious, and the people discontented, and to sow the seeds of discord between them. But upon how much more rational, popular, and humane principles

principles do a nobility maintain a moderate share of power and influence in a constitution, whose selves or ancestors have been selected out of the body of the people; whose dignity is attainable by the poorest citizen in the common wealth; whose younger sons return into the mass of the commonalty; and who, themselves, excepting the particular privileges attached to their situation, which, in no respect, infringe the general liberty, claim no superiority over commoners, to whom either family or fortune, independent of any act of the crown, has been the means of affording a liberal education. By such institutions as these, a distinction of rank, which is useful to the people, and an inequality of power, which is necessary to society, is regularly preserved, without any degradation of mankind; for a pre-eminence which every citizen, or his children, may lawfully attain without insisting on any other circumstances attending the British peerage, here alluded to, it is preposterous to consider as a degradation of him or his family; on the contrary, it seems natural for every British subject to cherish and support it, as an honourable object, which, if it is unlikely he should ever arrive at himself, may hereafter nobly reward the industry or spirit of his more prosperous

prosperous descendants. From the crown, indeed, in a well-regulated monarchy, both nobility and people should be excluded; but when the reason of this exclusion is considered, all objections to it vanish. It is no other than the good of the whole community: the prevention of the public mischiefs incident to the election of a king, and the anarchy, confusion, and bloodshed usually attendant upon it.

As the base of a pyramid is almost indescribably more spacious than any section of it near its pinnacle, so in a well-regulated monarchy must the number of those citizens, who procure their daily bread by labour of various kinds, be in proportion more numerous than the nobility and men of considerable property; nor is this circumstance any sound objection to the system, unless it can be shewn that the numerous body must be oppressed under it, and rendered unhappy by it. It cannot be assuming more than will be admitted to affirm, that no given degree of rank, property or power, necessarily brings with it a proportionable share of happiness. A prince on his throne may be as wretched as the most miserable of his subjects; and a nobleman residing in the most sumptuous

tuous mansion less happy than the poorest of the cottagers, whose thatched hovels are scattered over his wide demesnes. That civil inequality should be suffered to subsist in a state, is not therefore inconsistent with a due attention to the happiness of all its subjects. Nor is the instance of a great nation, oppressed by their prince or nobles, more a proof that monarchy or nobility are in their tendency hurtful to mankind, than the cruel massacres in France, during the year 1792, are sufficient to demonstrate that in no case any degree of democracy ought to be admitted into any constitution of government. Extreme want unavoidably produces human misery : whatever be the form of government in a country, if this is not provided against, as far as the nature of human affairs will permit, or nearly so, that country must groan under a despotism ; the just definition of which term seems to be, a power established in a community, which has not for its object the welfare of the whole. But how can a man reasonably or conscientiously complain of his situation, if, under the protection of a mild and equitable government, he lives in a happier and better state, than without its benign influence and patronage he possibly could do. Is it a sufficient reason

reason for him to be dissatisfied, that others enjoy under it more temporal good things, and therefore, in his conception, more happiness than he does? If his lot happens to be the lowest in society, he is perhaps healthy, whilst his richer neighbour may be tortured by some painful disease, or labour under other heavier afflictions. Even in case a person should be so unfortunate as to languish beneath the pressure of bodily illness, at the same time that he is so poor as to be totally unable, without assistance, to provide himself with the common necessities of life, he will have reason surely to thank his God, if he partakes of a state of society in which the infirm and helpless are objects of care and attention to the laws.

We subjects to the crown, and citizens of the commonwealth of Great Britain, enjoy a limited and well-regulated monarchy, under which the prerogatives of the prince are duly limited; civil, not savage liberty, secured to every subject; and provisions made, which are continually revised, for the relief of the impotent poor, not to speak of the many voluntary charities established amongst us. Can those, who are the wildest in their admiration of equality, justify the relinquishing so great

a positive good on speculative notions of improvement? Ought they not at least to stay, if they really mean well, as they pretend, to their country, till the experiment has been fully tried amongst nations, where it is now making at the expence of so much misery and blood? To say that a limited and well-regulated monarchy is the mode of government generally most conducive to the virtue and happiness of mankind, when united in large societies, is not to condemn republics. A form of government without a king, or single person at the head of it, is suitable to some situations. It might be wise in the Thirteen States of America, having, on their separation from their mother country, no king or nobility, to refrain from creating either; to bring two such great political powers at once into existence where they are not, being possibly almost as difficult and dangerous as to destroy them when established, is not only difficult and dangerous, but cruel and unjust also. The Americans, however, have not adopted, like the French, a wild species of republicanism. A single person presides over their commonwealth, even in its present state of infancy, and a senatorial chamber is already introduced
into

into their legislature, as an useful check on the more powerful and popular branch.

For a very small community, a republic either with or without a nobility, as it may happen, appears exceedingly proper; for if a single person be sovereign, and cannot depend upon his own subjects for support, which must be the case when they are few in number, he must necessarily look up to some foreign power for protection, and consequently be inclined to despise, and probably tyrannise over his own helpless people. But the king of a great and free nation has every inducement, besides that of duty, to promote the welfare of his subjects: he must know that he holds his crown by the same tenure which secures to them their liberties, estates, and privileges; that from them alone he can expect the support which is necessary to maintain his dignity; and that on their prosperity his own, and that of his family must depend. Under such circumstances, if the monarch is either virtuous or prudent, he will endeavour to preserve inviolate the constitution of his country, and promote, so far as his authority and situation will enable him to do, the good of those he governs, as
our

our revered and beloved sovereign now does. If, unfortunately, the prince on the throne should be of a contrary disposition, not only vicious, but unwise also, such a bad king being the object of general suspicion, would not have power enough to enslave a great and brave nation; or to do them so much harm as the ambition of a popular and unsuspected demagogue may, and perpetually does produce, amid the confusion and tumults of democracy. But to return to our main subject:—Since it has been shewn that equality cannot subsist in any state of society, and that in the variety of civil stations consists the happiness of mankind, what ought we to think of such principles as are avowed, acted upon, and industriously disseminated by the present leaders of a neighbouring nation? Principles! which declare not only that civil equality is the unalienable right of every man; but that he who forgoes it, is a wretch, a slave, a being who hath basely divested himself of his birth-right; a creature not fit to be called a man. Let others, after an unbiassed and mature consideration, determine for themselves. To me, these levelling notions appear destructive of every conceivable species of human society; necessarily productive of the wildest

est anarchy ; and only consistent with a savage state. If so, let those who wish to render the whole human race savage, and actually reduce men as nearly as possible to the level of the brute creation, proceed without scruple, and without remorse, in their bloody, bold, and wild career.

“ Havoc, and spoil, and ruin are *their* gain.”

Let them artfully and insidiously endeavour, by flattering and inflaming the passions, to confound the reason of mankind—fit means to accomplish such ends. Let them persuade the poor man, while he is robbing and murdering *his* rich benefactor, that he is only reclaiming an usurped right, and punishing a tyrant, who had infringed the just order of things. When he has done the deed, let the levelling philosopher assure, and, if it be possible, convince the mind of the ungrateful murderer, that he has been acting according to the strict rule of right, and the immutable laws of nature.

Such be the attempts, and such the conduct of levellers ; who, if true to their principles, must act thus. On the other hand, let those who, while they presume not to account themselves gods or angels,

angels, are desirous to continue men and rational beings, resolve firmly, deliberately, and virtuously to oppose and resist the impetuous fury of this desolating torrent.

If what has been advanced has any foundation in truth, a civil is more desirable for mankind than a savage state, and to the former a right to acquire and possess property is essential: consequently he who has possession of property by fair and honourable purchase, descent, or grant, agreeable to the laws and institutions of his country, equitably constructed, and justly administered, cannot be forcibly deprived of it without the grossest injustice, not only to himself, but to those also who depend on him for a share of the advantages arising out of it.

I know the unfeeling democrat avows that he considers the comforts and well-doing of a large part of his species as of no account. Could he, by the misery of some innocent persons, occasion the happiness of a greater number, something like argument might be urged on his side of the question. Had they said, for instance, in France—we allow that our nobility have been cruelly treated,

treated, but it was necessary they should suffer in order to promote the good of the whole community. Such a declaration would have favoured at least of reason. But what are the arguments the French use—Men are born equal; an assertion, which we have seen is untrue. Without equality of property, civil equality is but a pretence and a name; with it no civil state can subsist, for reasons already urged. Unless a savage state be desirable therefore, equality cannot be the summum bonum, but stripped of all borrowed ornaments, and even of reality, must appear a mere phantom, the vain attempt to realize which is destructive of all the temporal comforts of life, and of every sound principle of religion, morality and virtue.

How could the undigested materials of the globe we inhabit have been rendered advantageous to man, or other terrestrial animals, but by being subjected to that excellent and beautiful system, which we in part behold and enjoy? And what is that system? Does it consist in equality? Is the brute equal to the man? Our levellers, I acknowledge, are desirous and active to render him so, by degrading a rational being to a savage state. But can they succeed? However they may for a time confound, can they de-

destroy man's intellectual faculties? If they could,
 would he be likely to become either a happier or
 a nobler being? After all, can they equalise the
 Alp to the mole-hill, or undo and reverse the
 works of God? If not, I am bold to assure them
 they never can establish equality on earth, the
 Almighty Being having obviously decreed there
 shall be on earth inequality. Here shall extend
 the wide branching oak his spacious circumfe-
 rence; here raise his lofty Heaven-aspiring head;
 close underneath grow thou the creeping, twining
 bramble. So willed the Sole Creator. He gave
 us reason, that we might derive advantage from
 it; let us endeavour to do so, rather than abuse
 it to our own misery and destruction. When
 by a due exertion of that inestimable faculty we
 are maturely led to believe that equality on earth
 is the intention of the Supreme Being; the means
 destined by Him to promote the welfare of us his
 rational creatures; when a cool observance of a
 perfect equality in the natural faculties of man,
 and of a distinct and obvious analogy arising out
 of the exact equality subsisting amongst all the
 works of the Creator, shall have, beyond a doubt,
 persuaded us that equality is the right of man, let
 us rise in its support, and destroy the tyrants and
 usurpers of the earth: that is, according to the
 French definition of those terms, every man, wo-
 man,

man, or child, who possesses or claims any advantages, save those of being born, vegetating and feeling for a period, and contributing to the continuance of his or her species. For if any human creature possesses or claims any thing more, he is, or pretends to be, superior to some other human creature, and consequently, on the levelling principles, is, or endeavours to be, a tyrant over them, and an usurper of their natural and unalienable rights.

Before we act on these principles, however, let us consider what must really be the consequences in case they should generally prevail. Those who now have property, will be deprived of it, and rendered as miserable as they can be by temporal misfortunes. The greater number of them will, first or last, be cruelly massacred, and the few who remain, after being reduced to a state of wretchedness and indigence, live only to have their misfortunes insulted over, and to lament the cruel loss of their nearest relations and friends. Whomsoever so trying a lot may afflict, may that religion, which the levellers despise, in defiance of all their daring impiety, and unfeeling cruelty, support to their shame, and the condemnation of their wicked principles. Persons so afflicted will learn, and be notable instances of this truth, that there is no

sure trust but in God ; and possibly even some
 of their persecutors may be reclaimed by reflec-
 tions arising out of their striking examples. Be
 that as it may, their temporal situation will be as
 wretched as man can make it. But will the mul-
 titude derive benefit from their sufferings ? All
 government being destroyed, a course of time
 must shew mankind the necessity of re-establish-
 ing it. The old inequalities will then gradually
 re-assume their existence, and after almost infinite
 bloodshed, cruelty, wickedness, irreligion, and
 immorality, mankind will ultimately return (for I
 cannot conceive that their Creator will suffer the
 whole race to become barbarous) pretty much to
 the state they lived under before the breaking in
 of the levelling torrent. A few fortunate persons
 will then occupy the situations of those who are
 now, or have lately been, the rich and powerful ;
 and the bulk of mankind will experience the same
 advantages, and the same inconveniences, which
 they have hitherto done, and certainly be more
 or less inferior to, and dependent on, an aristo-
 cracy of a few. Some will, as we Englishmen
 now do, curb that aristocracy in such a manner,
 as to prevent its becoming oppressive, and to ren-
 der it useful to society. Others, like the old
 French, by flattering and imitating the vices of
 their

their princes and nobles, will bow beneath the yoke of tyranny. If I have stated the probability of these events fairly, is it not right for us to make a stand where we are, and to acknowledge which is the truth, that we already enjoy almost all the advantages that can be derived from society and Government? Whenever the world shall be at rest, let reforms, if they are wanted, be proposed, and let such as are needful be adopted. In the mean while, and until she is so, ought we not to be firm in maintaining inviolate all the established rights, powers, and pre-eminences, under which we have upon the whole so remarkably prospered? In times of peace and quiet, speculative subjects may be securely and often usefully discussed; but, when blows are the immediate result of arguments, it behoves men to be extremely cautious how they suffer their minds to be influenced by such as lead to change and innovation, because a good thing once thrown away, can seldom afterwards be recovered. It must be acknowledged, that nothing really or substantially good can be produced by a system, which is fit only to destroy, and such have we proved to be the levelling system, which some wicked men and wild enthusiasts are anxious to substitute, in the place of our excellent established Constitution.

Constitution. To the defence of that Constitution, let every Briton devote his abilities, and if necessary his life, swearing to hold all such as enemies, who are enemies to it. Those who make a public declaration of these sound principles, act with no less policy than honesty. Consider the fate of the moderate and well-meaning Revolutionists of France, who, desirous to bless their country with the happiest of all establishments for such an Empire, a limited monarchy, consented contrary to their principles, because contrary to the principles on which a limited monarchy must be founded, to the abrogation of all orders in the state; the arbitrary destruction of property; the annihilation of the established Clergy; the disgrace of religion; and the persecution of numerous bodies of men, merely for being faithful to their oaths; for refusing to deny their principles; for endeavouring to protect their families and property; and for not being able at once to eradicate every feeling of human nature; to break every former connection, and to change every ancient opinion. What is become of these moderate and well-meaning, but weak or misled Revolutionists? Either their mangled bodies have been ignominiously dragged through the streets of Paris, or they pine in chains or indigent banishment:—How has the king himself

been

been treated, who patriotically and humanely convoked the states of his kingdom, with a view to reform and not to destroy the monarchy; but afterwards through fear or foolish and unjustifiable policy, dared not to withhold his assent from many acts, which besides being in the highest degree cruel and unjust in themselves, were sure to deprive the throne of supports, without which it was not capable of standing. Could either Louis XVI. or the Marquis de la Fayette have been more miserable, had they resolutely opposed the factious on the first appearance of their levelling designs, and endeavoured at least to save the whole gentry of France from destruction. If, after virtuously attempting to confer freedom on their country, they had fallen in so praise-worthy a resistance to ferocious cruelty and injustice, would not the regret of all good men have followed them to their tombs, and the heroism of the king and general been celebrated to the latest times? while, if they had succeeded, happy and glorious indeed would have been their situation. Now, who pities La Fayette? or who can refrain from despising the conduct, while he deplores the fate of the unhappy Louis? When I think of these things, I cannot hesitate for a moment to declare that, as an individual subject, I
had

had rather fall with the British Constitution, than survive its destruction. Ought the consideration of a family to be a check to this sentiment in any man? The votaries of equality spare neither age nor sex. In resistance only is there security, therefore, to our wives and children, any more than to ourselves, against their inhumanities. The just and almost universal determination which has been displayed in this country, to preserve to every description of her citizens their established rights, rationally confirms a confidence which the general conduct of Britons has implanted in the minds of many considerate men, that Great Britain shall long continue to afford an example of true liberty to the world. Our ancestors performed their part towards the preservation of freedom, when they held up the glass to despotism, and having shewn her what she was, discarded her from their country, I trust, for ever. Let us emulate so glorious an example, and do our part also, by grappling with the contrary extreme, now become dangerous; and utterly exploding in this happy island, as wicked and chimerical, all attempts to equalize mankind.

FINIS.